

03/28/2008 9:41 AM
from Joseph

I attended the meeting on March 25 regarding the future of the fairgrounds and the proposed new arena.

First of all, I am dubious about the proposed financing for the new arena. Anything that sounds too good to be true, e.g. "no bonds, no cost to the taxpayers, etc.", probably is just that.

Secondly, I am against "partnerships" between private companies with lots of capital and government agencies. This is undemocratic and leads to undue influence and corruption of government officials.

Thirdly, as a veteran I am offended that Mesa County cannot find the money to maintain a facility that was originally donated to them by veterans. Perhaps USDA could provide a grant to the county to maintain and upgrade the facilities. Or perhaps Mesa County should do away with the facilities altogether and convert the fairgrounds into a top quality county park with trails, restrooms, and additional landscaping. Open space in Orchard Mesa is vanishing rapidly. This would be a wonderful gift to our children, grandchildren, and generations to come.

Finally, I am offended at any suggestion that part of the fairgrounds may be sold off and developed. NOT ONE SQUARE INCH of the present fairgrounds property should be sold or given up for development!!!

The fairgrounds property is a historical legacy that MUST REMAIN in the public sector, for the recreational use of the public.

03/26/2008 6:36 PM

Re: Future Use of Fairground Property

I believe the new indoor events center will eventually lead to a partial, if not total, elimination of the current fairground. If this should happen, I feel that Orchard Mesa should have something to occupy this location that will draw people from all around. I found out years ago that the City of Loveland, Colorado had a policy whereby the city was divided into four equal parts for the purpose of making sure that all outstanding future projects by the city were located equally among the four parts, thus eliminating the possibility that any part of the city would eventually become a slum area. It's been a long time since Orchard Mesa has become a site for an outstanding project by the city. It now appears that the fairgrounds will soon be partially eliminated. With all the new sub-divisions being built in Orchard Mesa, I think it's time for the Mesa County Planners to seriously consider Orchard Mesa a serious contender for future projects that will enhance the area.

03/26/2008 4:40 PM
from Dave

Re: Fairgrounds meeting

One of the PowerPoint slides used at the Fairgrounds meeting Tuesday afternoon said, "Mesa County Commissioners have expressed desire to retain the arboretum." That looks like fence-sitters' wording. It's not strong enough if the Commissioners truly intend to preserve the Extension and its gardens. It's misleading if they don't. There's more than a semantic difference between expressing a desire and being staunchly committed. Are the Extension and gardens subject to relocation or not?

There is inconsistency in the county's approach. According to one slide, the Fairgrounds is an underutilized community asset. According to another, it hosts more than 350 events and has more than 450 use days each year. Reed Mitchell said the Riverside Arena would take the pressure off the Fairgrounds. It seems unlikely that the Fairgrounds could be both underutilized and in need of pressure relief.

Was there a point in stressing that 4-H is the most frequent user of the Fairgrounds—such as: if that's all it's used for, maybe we don't need it? The 4-H program has a long history of graduating young people who go on to become community leaders. If the Fairgrounds went unused but for 4-H activities, it's expense would be worthwhile. Nobody bats an eye at the public money expended for all the sports complexes used by the youth in the county. The Commissioners need to make a firm statement that the 4-H program will not suffer whether it relocates to the arena or stays where it is.

Which county staff members will conduct the feasibility study? What are their qualifications? Do they fully understand the uses and user groups at the Fairgrounds? Will the user groups get to participate in the feasibility study? How can the public be assured that the outcome of the feasibility study has not been predetermined at the direction of the Commissioners?

Questions for Reed Mitchell: if this is such a good idea, why does it need public participation? He stated that his group is negotiating with an arena management service that manages over 200 similar arenas in the US. How many of those 200-plus arenas operate in the black without public subsidies? Suppose that the arena gets built and the County Fair relocates to it. Then, suppose that the management service has a last-minute opportunity to book Willie Nelson on the same day that the 4-H Market Livestock Sale is scheduled. Willie might bring in a few thousand people; the other a few hundred at most. Which event will go on?

In article in the Daily Sentinel on Wednesday, March 26, Commissioner Meis was quoted to say that the county needs to spend more money on public lands. The Fairgrounds is public lands, it needs \$10 million in improvements, and it has a multimillion dollar backlog of maintenance items. If the county can't come up with the money the Fairgrounds needs, where is it going to get the money to go into the campground business?

As I left the meeting, I had the feeling that I hadn't heard the whole story. At first, I chalked that up to the distrust for elected officials and their appointees that I developed as a state employee. Then, I overheard several people around me voice similar thoughts. Maybe they used to be state employees, too, but a surer bet would be that the Commissioners and staff face questions of openness and transparency that they need to address and get settled.

03/26/2008 12:16 PM
from RDK

Re: Last night's meeting

Tom,

Last night's meeting was interesting. You had a good turnout of concerned citizens and you attempted to have a one way communication and tried to control the public debate. The audience left more frustrated than when they came. I suppose you can check off the public input items on the planning outline and proceed with the process?

I would recommend that you hire a public involvement facilitator (neutral party) and have a number of open public meetings where the public can openly address their questions and concerns to the players in this development. We can't hear you until we are sure you care about our concerns. As far as the outcome of last night, the meaning of your communication is the response you got.

We are not interested in some half-ass carpet-bagger from Denver, telling us what we need to put Grand Junction on the map. If there is such an opportunity for a hockey team here, why doesn't he build the project with private funding? Why do we need the city, county, USDA, and John Salazar to sell us the idea? Lining up a bunch of politicians to gain support for the project is not going to help the cause. They are elected officials and we can throw the bums out next election.

If you really want to build a successful project, you need to get the community to see the value in it for them, and get behind the effort. If you think you push this through because you are the government, the people who were disenfranchised will vote with their dollars and won't use the facilities.

Good luck, and best regards,

03/26/2008 10:46 AM
from Tracy V.

Hi Tom,

I just wanted to make sure I understand correctly about last night's meeting and clarify what I thought was explained to me. I want to pass on the info to my 4-H club.

The new event center will be publicly and privately owned, which will be better for both parties. The plan would be to sell the property that the "C" building, barn, stalls, and stadium are on right now. The funds that the county gets from that sale would then pay for the new building, barn, and stalls that will be built next to the new Event Center. Nothing will change as far as

fees for 4-Hers to use the buildings for meetings. If there is an event going on at the Event Center, we will still have enough room to use the building on the publicly owned property.

The Pros for this scenario are that we will have shared parking with the event center; nicer facilities (avoiding the problem of spending 10 million dollars to update the current fairgrounds); and easy access to main roads such as Riverside Pkwy. and Hwy. 6 and 50.

If I am wrong about any of this, would you correct me? Because I don't want to relay anything that is incorrect.

If this is the case and I have all of the right info, I am really excited about this opportunity for the county! Thank you for all the info,

**03/26/2008 9:04 AM
from Tracy D.**

Re: Riverside Arena

Good Day,

Wow, I was impressed with your presentation. Yes our community has long needed a facility for a wide range of events. I was on a committee for a arena a few years ago and it was to be supported by tax dollars, and of course this is hard to present to the total community without educating them properly, no political faction wants to set up for failure. Also the location was not credible. I really think you are on the right track, partnership with the groups you have, no negative impact from the community as a whole, unfortunately you will have groups that are tunnel vision, because they cannot see out of their agenda. These associations or clubs have not been out of the county to see other events centers. It has always astonished me that lesser populated areas have a feeling for the capacity and income of even a agriculture arena; i.e. Moab, Cortez, South Jordan, Eagle, Salt lake has numerous. Hurricane Utah.

I can see also that if we moved Fair to this facility that maybe more people would come, more of a professional venue, than the broken down park we have now. My only concern is that we make it very low cost or no cost for 4H. Remember that you do not see use fees, but the retail, tax dollars are being spent at a high rate. Agriculture families spend around 217,000 (1999 CSU equine report) of course that could be higher due to inflation. They purchase feed, vehicles, equipment, food, gas, trailers, services, bedding, seed, plants ect.. More money is spread through the county through agriculture than any other business. 4H members are always ranked higher in High Schools and have higher GPAs and become more successful business people for our future growth. We need to embrace our future, help them out if all possible. There could always maybe some avenues for negotiation with maintenance, labor hours, or maybe a donation of some kind of product the members could issue.

My other suggestion for the existing facilities. I do understand, not to issue a tax bond you need to sell part of the property off, whether it is commercial or residential does not matter. The county has long promised the Sherriff Posse a new location, this is really part of being responsible for the safety and search and rescue they do for our community and security free of charge. The County/City could give them the existing event arena (not the covered, but the

grand stands) sell the property at 25 1/2 and F1/2 that the posse is currently at and the other part of the fairgrounds (the covered arena, practice, barn area, camping) this should still have enough revenue, and Two Rivers. This would hopefully accommodate all that is concerned, and they could share with the Posse, maybe even small clubs like Grand Junction Horse Show, Cattleman's, could still have a facility, that is cost effective for them, of course they would be responsible for maintenance, until we can integrate the Riverside property or Mchetts land, that's more visible off I70, plus has more acreage.

This is emotional even for me, I am a native, I grew up near the Posse grounds, have enjoyed keeping my family busy with 4H, girl scouts, boy scouts up at the fairgrounds. And growing up, my neighbors always had race horses at Uranium Downs. Great memories. But we have to grow to become a successful community. Where I rode horses and played is now the Mesa Mall. Change is always good, but hard for some old-timers, maybe we can make small adjustments, so as not to get them out of their comfort circle. Thank you for your time and consideration of ideas. I am always willing to help.

Good Luck,

03/26/2008 8:20 AM

Re: use of the area

I would be great to have a place for indoor concerts.

We live right behind the fairgrounds, and if the arena, will help keep the noise down, from the montster truck shows, and the mortorcycle events, that would be a blessing!

**03/26/2008 8:04 AM
from Judy**

You requested comments and questions, and I have several. They appear below:

- a.) I would rather see a commitment from the BOCC rather than an "expressed desire" to maintain our gardens.
- b.) It was never made clear what the county's contribution to this "arena" would be. Is there to be a financial commitment, just media support, or clearing the way with building permits in a flood plain?
- c.) If there is a financial commitment, why should the county support private enterprise with public funds?
- d.) To my knowledge, "arenas" all over the country rely on some type of public support to function. Have you made any studies of similar venues? If the city/county enter into a commitment with this enterprise, how long until tax dollars are being used to support it?

e.) What impact would this "arena" have with the Country/Rock Jam concerts which have a major financial impact on Mesa County? Has anyone sought the opinion of the "Jam" administration?

f.) If the Fairgrounds and Two Rivers aren't profitable, the Avalon is constantly on the verge of bankruptcy and the Cabaret is even closer than that, why do you think that an "arena" will support itself?

g.) What assurances do the small, lightly funded users of the fairgrounds (i.e. 4H, the Llama show) have that the "arena" can meet their needs and small budgets?

This needs alot more work before the county should commit **any** resources to the issue.

**03/25/2008 3:31 PM
from Sam**

My name is Sam XXXX, and I'm a senior 4-H member. 4-H is a big part of the Grand Valley, and we need to realize the extent to which 4-H uses the fairgrounds. My concerns with the possible moving of the facilities and relocating the Mesa County fair and other auxiliary events held at the current fairgrounds are:

1) Lack of necessary facilities. If the grounds are moved, we need to have at least the same facilities for the loading/unloading, showing, and keeping of livestock as we do now. If we don't have these, 4-h'ers wouldn't be able to show and sell their animals at the fair like we do now. Also, for the sake of the animals, and for safety, they need to be a reasonable distance from major sources of noise and commotion, such as sports arenas.

2) Cost for usage of facilities. 4-H currently uses the existing grounds for many purposes in addition to than the Mesa County Fair, and we are able to do so at practically no cost. With the installation of a privately owned facility, 4-H may not be able to afford to hold these events.

3) Transportation to the grounds. Currently, access to and from the fairgrounds is easy, even for large trucks and trailers like the ones used by livestock-showing families. If new grounds are installed, easy access is a must.

I'm supportive of new facilities only if the above concerns are met, simply because 4-H cannot function well otherwise.

03/25/2008 9:16 AM
from Carl

Commissioners - Many counties in many States allow some of the parking area of the Fair Grounds to be used as RV parking. They have installed 1. potable water hook ups 2. electrical service hook ups 3. Sewage hook ups. The charge for these "spaces" and allow them to be used on certain days. There are companies that offer a "manager" on site, staying at the "host site" and that controls the area., This is a great income source for the Fair Grounds and during certain events this is a welcome site for the entrants.

03/24/2008 12:22 PM
from Darrell

Re: Mesa County Fairgrounds - Where do we go from here?

Mr. Fisher:

I will be unable to attend the March 25th meeting on the future of the fairgrounds, as I will be attending a similar meeting on the Northwest Study Area for the Persigo sewer expansion plan (My home is in the study area). However I would still like to submit several thoughts for you as you decide what's to happen to the fairgrounds.

I realize that with population growing in the valley the city and county are looking for any land that is un- or underutilized to develop more efficiently, and the fairgrounds may well fall into that category. It is not clear to me that the proposed civic arena is an adequate replacement, however.

The new area is significantly smaller, with poorer access than the current location.

The current facility, while old and outdated, provides a very cost effective location for many groups at low to no cost - groups like 4H and the CSU Extension. The extension holds many continuing education classes for homeowners, small acreage owners and master gardeners at the community buildings which may well be unaffordable at newer, more expensive facilities. I've personally taken classes on irrigation design and maintenance as well as weed identification. Not life saving by any means, but definitely of benefit to the valley.

I fear that the moving of the fairgrounds to these new, smaller facilities will be the death knell to the fair as well. If the new location proves unsatisfactory, I doubt the fair will relocate again, it will just cease. While agriculture is playing a smaller role in the Grand Valley, we still claim to value the peaches, grapes, and wine we get from the orchards and vineyards. The yearly fair focusses our interests in this part of the valley, as does an active extension service. The loss of the arboretum and smaller demonstration gardens will reduce the positive effects of the extension and possibly the best master gardener program in the state.

In closing, I suspect the new civic arena is not likely to serve the same audience as the current fairgrounds. I believe the new arena will cater to and attract more lucrative activities in order to adequately support the facility, and the community based activities will fall by the wayside unless specific actions are taken to provide for them.

Thank you for your time.

03/15/2008 10:40 AM
from Kay

Dear Mr. Fisher,
Thank You for giving us the opportunity to voice our opinions on Fair Grounds usage before making big decisions regarding new facilities.

I am not opposed to having facilities that could accommodate larger events and be updated, but I fear all of these improvements would cost alot and would drive the fee for usage out of sight for non-profit youth groups like 4-H, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts.

I have been a very active 4-H leader in Mesa County for 35 years and have had the opportunity to watch and help many of Mesa County's youth grow into very good, caring citizens and community leaders. We have been able to use the current Fair Grounds space and buildings for little or no cost for many meetings and leadership building activities. If there was very much of a cost to use the facilities, we would not be able to teach and lead the youth in this manner.

For example, I come down from Collbran once a month to teach leathercraft to leaders so they can in turn teach the youth. If we had to charge the leaders to come learn to be leaders they probably would not be able to do that.

Please keep in mind that whether a new facility is built or not, we still need day to day facilities for groups at a low cost.

Thank You for listening,